

Marketing of Library Products and Services in Digital Environment: *Some Insights*

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Abstract

Libraries and information centres in a context of change /transformation: External forces (political, economic, social, managerial, technological) Changing financial environment and increased demand for services from users. Market research and segmentation, Consumer analysis, Market positioning (Prioritizing clients, groups and information services) marketing programme (Optimal mix of products, costing and pricing, promotion, distribution, delivery mode) Market Audit (evaluation of plan and implementation). In this paper authors discussed basic concept of information marketing, differentiated between sales concept and marketing concept and narrated the plan for marketing of information products and services. The paper concludes with strategies for information marketing.



Information products and Services, Marketing of information, Digital environment.

1. Introduction

Marketing of information is one of the newest concepts to apply to library and information centers activities and functions more particularly promoting innovative and emerging library products and services. Libraries can benefit by letting the community know just what part of everything the library provides. Ultimately you want to match library strengths with users' needs. Marketing positions your library in the minds of the community as a "go-to" source for information and helps users understand what you have to offer them. Marketing builds good customer relations, and contributes to a positive relationship with media, businesses, local government agencies, and organizations.

Often marketing is about changing perceptions -- ours and theirs! Everyone benefits when we find out what users really want, and when we let our community know everything that a library can do, in the library or on the Web.

2. Marketing of Information: Some Basic Definitions

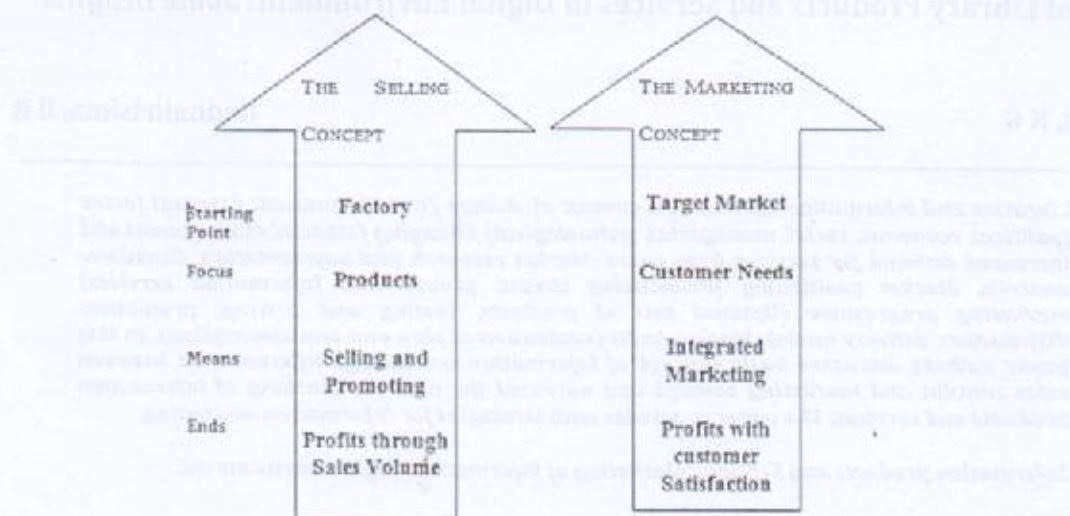
"The process of planning and executing conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives." (Peter D. Bennett, 1995).

"A social and managerial process by which individual groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering, and exchanging products of value with others." (Kotler, Philip, 1997,

In libraries, the "exchange" part of the marketing process may consist of continued taxpayer support in exchange for valued library services.

3. Contrast between the Sales Concept and the Marketing Concept:

Selling focuses on the needs of the seller; Marketing on the needs of the customer, information consumer. Selling is preoccupied with the seller's need to convert his product into cash; Marketing with the idea of satisfying the needs of the user/customer by means of the product and the whole cluster of things associated with creating, delivering and finally consuming it.



4. The selling concept takes an inside-out perspective:

It starts with the factory, focuses on existing products, and calls for heavy selling and promoting to produce profitable sales. The marketing concept rests on Four Pillars:

- Target Market
- Customer Needs
- Integrated Marketing, and
- Profitability.

- **Target Market:** Companies do best when they choose their target market(s) carefully and prepare tailored marketing programs. A market can't satisfy everyone in a market. Everyone don't like the same soft drink, hotel, automobile, college, and move. Therefore, marketers start by dividing up the market. Examining demographic, psychographics, and behavioural differences among buyers can identify market segments. The marketer then decides which segments present the greatest opportunity which are its target markets. e.g., Volvo Cars and Bus
- **Customer Needs:** The Library and Information Centers can define its target market but fail to correctly understand the customers' needs.
 - The market must try to understand the target market's Needs, Wants and Demands.
 - Needs are the basic human requirements. People need food, air, water, clothing and shelter to survive. People also have strong needs for recreation/entertainment, education etc.
 - These needs become wants when they are directed to specific objects that might satisfy the need.
 - Wants are shaped by one's society. Demands are wants for specific products backed by an ability to pay.
- **Integrated Marketing:** When all the company's departments work together serve the customer's interests, the result is integrated marketing. Unfortunately, not all employees are trained and motivated to work for the customer. e.g., Indian Railway System. Integrated marketing takes place on two levels.
 - First, the various marketing functions such as sales force, advertising, customer service, product management, marketing research- must work together. All these marketing functions must be coordinated from the customer's point of view.

- Second, marketing must be embraced by the other departments; they must also think customer. According to David Packard of HP: Marketing is far too important to be left only to the marketing department! Marketing is not a department so much as a library orientation.

Traditional Organization Chart	Modern Customer-oriented Organization Chart
Top Management	Customers
Middle Management	Front-line People
Front-line people	Middle Management
Customers	Top Management

- **Profitability:** The ultimate purpose of the marketing concept is to help organisations achieve the objectives.
 - In the case of private firms, the major objective is long-run profitability;
 - In the case of non-profit and public organisations, it is surviving and attracting enough funds to perform useful work.
 - Private firms should not aim for profits as such, but rather to achieve profits as a consequence of creating superior customer value.
 - A library makes popular by satisfying customer needs better than its competitors.
 - However, most libraries and information centers do not embrace the marketing concept until driven to it by circumstances. Various developments prod them to take the marketing concept to heart.
- **The objective of marketing of information is to;**
 - Enhance the use of information
 - Generate resources for running the service continuously
 - Facilitate production of user oriented rather than producer oriented products.
- **Information marketing Requirements:**
 - Identification of target customer/user groups
 - Determination of their needs
 - Designing of services/products appropriate to their needs
 - Choosing right type of distribution channel
 - Feedback and evaluation of products
- **Plan for Market of Information**
 - Based on the market research done to understand the needs of the customers.
 - The Marketing Audit, PEST, SWOT these analyses the library's positioning in the market.
 - The next step is to develop a marketing plan that lays out the actual process or activities to achieve the goals and objectives set by the library.
 - For an effective plan, relevant marketing activities targeted at the right audience must be well coordinated, and executed by staff with the right caliber.

A good marketing plan begins with a mission statement that defines the objectives of the library or the information centre, which includes an identification of the target market segments.

- **Conducting a Marketing Audit:** The marketing audit consists of an analysis of the library's
 - external environment (competitors, patrons, sponsors, and developmental opportunities) &
 - an assessment of the internal environment (library's strengths and weaknesses).

As an ongoing process, the staff planning the audit should involve all stakeholders –

- Different level of staff, board members and community members, before deciding what elements to cover.
- Care is needed for developing procedures for data collection, analyzing collected data, preparing and presenting results and recommendations to the management.
- The process of conducting the marketing audit provides a basis for informed decision-making and contributes to the final marketing plan.
- Some libraries include an analysis of the 4Ps (that is, the marketing mix) as part of the systematic efforts in a marketing audit.

- **PEST:**

- Political factors,
- Economic factors,
- Social factors, and
- Technology factors.

These are all elements that may have an effect on your future library activities. Make a list of all factors that may be either beneficial or detrimental to the success of your marketing efforts to run a good library.

- **SWOT**

- Strengths,
- Weaknesses,
- Opportunities and
- Threats and is critical to your marketing plan.

- To build a good marketing plan for the library one of the anchoring steps is the identification of SWOT.
- By completing the review of your activities and your market place, you should be armed with the information necessary to identify your SWOTs and PESTs.
- **Information Marketing Strategies:** The plan specifies marketing strategies, the promotional methods chosen to suit the target audience.
- Strategies in the plan depend on the user group and/or the service being offered. The "marketing mix" that you need to consider consists of the four Ps (product, place, price, promotion).
- Select the Products research determined were needed, use the Place or method of delivery your users want, calculate the Price or budget to develop and promote the service, and choose Promotion methods targeted to your users.
- Methods include public relations, advertising, direct mail, telemarketing, Internet, public service spots on TV, local radio station, monthly book review column in your local paper, visual displays, press releases, comprehensive media campaign, etc. Methods are based on assessment of users and the nature of the product. (An example for a YA event would be a letter to teachers or advertising in the school paper.) Learn from others.

5. Conclusion

Any successful library must have knowledge about prospective or current clients and must implement a marketing plan that is regularly revised. Unlike the longer-term strategic planning documents, marketing plans in libraries should be revised annually, like a annual budget, and should reflect changes and revised goals based on the previous year's experience. A marketing plan is an important tool for making your library victorious in this age of change, where working smarter is necessary to achieve your desired results.

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